NEWS RELEASE-Office of Attorney General

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February 17, 2017

STENEHJEM URGES PROTESTORS TO COMPLY WITH THE GOVERNOR'S EMERGENCY EVACUATION ORDER

BISMARCK, ND - Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem today urged immediate compliance with Governor Burgum's emergency evacuation order of protestors residing on federal land managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers in Morton County, for purposes of environmental cleanup to protect public health and prevent harm to the Missouri River.

"I urge all remaining individuals to immediately vacate the area known as the 'Oceti Sakowin camp site' so that cleanup work can be completed before the area is inundated with floodwater. The threat to the environment is very real and the situation is urgent. This is about protecting the land and the waters of the Missouri River from pollution from tons of garbage, human waste and other hazardous items," said Stenehjem.

Stenehjem emphasized the emergency evacuation order is not intended to preclude the lawful exercise of free speech and will only become a law enforcement matter if those who have been ordered to leave refuse to do so. In that case, law enforcement will do what is necessary to protect public health and safety.

"It's time for protesters to either go home, or move to a legal site where they can peaceably continue their activities without risk of further harm to the environment. As the Governor and law enforcement officials have said, anyone who refuses to leave could be subject to arrest," Stenehjem continued.

It is a separate criminal offense to refuse to comply with an emergency evacuation order.

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